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AN OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY AND AREA PLANNING FOR RURAL YOUTH.

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COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING FOR RURAL YOUTH CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH THE EXISTING ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE PROVIDED BY RURAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT (RAD), WHOSE CENTRAL IDEA IS ORGANIZING COMMUNITY LEADERS TO IDENTIFY PROBLEMS, INVENTORY RESOURCES, AND FURTHER ORGANIZE AND PLAN TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THESE PROBLEMS. HOWEVER, WHEN COMMUNITY LEADERS FAIL TO ASSUME THIS RESPONSIBILITY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, THE STATE SHOULD TAKE ACTION, AND WHEN STATES FAIL TO MEET THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD TAKE ACTION. THESE REINFORCEMENTS MUST BE APPLIED WHEN NEEDED, BUT THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE SAME KIND OF PROGRAMS CAN BE UTILIZED TO SOLVE YOUTH PROBLEMS IN EVERY SITUATION. TO INSURE AN EFFECTIVE JOB IN PLANNING FOR SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS OF RURAL YOUTH, WE MUST--(1) PROVIDE FACTUAL INFORMATION TO THE DECISION MAKERS, (2) INVOLVE BOTH POLITICIANS AND THOSE NOT SUBJECT TO POLITICAL PRESSURES, (3) TEACH PRINCIPLES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, DEMOCRATIC GROUP ACTION, AND LEADERSHIP, (4) DO A BETTER JOB OF PUBLIC RELATIONS, AND (5) PUT MORE EFFORT IN THE PLANNING. THIS SPEECH WAS PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL OUTLOOK CONFERENCE ON RURAL YOUTH, OCTOBER 23-26, 1967, WASHINGTON, D. C., SPONSORED JOINTLY BY THE U. S. DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE, HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE, INTERIOR, AND LABOR, OEO, AND THE PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON YOUTH OPPORTUNITY. (ES)

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AN OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY AND AREA PLANNING FOR RURAL YOUTH

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It is a privilege to participate in this National Outlook Conference on Rural Youth. I see some of my former associates in the audience from my years of graduate work here in the Washington area and at the University of Wisconsin. I appreciate this opportunity to renew acquaintances and discuss with you the subject of community and area planning for rural youth.

First, I will give my impressions on what is taking place across the country in this important area of work. Then I have some thoughts on how we might improve the situation. Your reactions will be welcomed, and I hope we will have ample time to deal with questions you might have.

Planning has become a byword across the country and numerous programs have been launched under the banners of comprehensive planning, land-use planning, regional planning and community planning. We continue to pour more of our resources into physical resource planning -- magnificient highways, bridges, buildings, etc. -- while some of us try earnestly to be heard on the need to devote a greater proportion of our resources to "human resource planning." Perhaps we are being heard because only last week I heard a representative from our State Division of Planning say, "We are thinking broader than land-use planning; we are people oriented in our thinking." Maybe we can give a weak "hurrah," but you and I know that action speaks louder than words!

What is your definition of a community? Is it the small rural neighborhood where you grew up, or is it the county seat town where you did much of your shopping, or is it the town where you went to high school? Perhaps it is the place where you now live with anywhere from 100 to 100,000 people? My point is that if there are 25 people here, there are

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probably 25 different concepts of what a community entails. Therefore, I think we should begin this discussion with a definition of what I consider a community. I think of a community as a group of people with common interests and goals. There can be many communities in a particular geographical area and for some purposes the entire geographical area might be considered a community. At any rate, a community is a group of people. Technology and the development of new knowledge over the past decades have tended to bring about a change in image of a community. While the community has broadened for many people, I think we can still safely say that most people tend to think of a very small place when they think of their local community. Even within a county, you have many people who are indifferent to needs of areas of the county other than the one in which they live. People hold loyalty to an outmoded community. They cling to the small local high school even though it may no longer serve the needs of the community. They always fall back on the statement, "We have had some good ones to graduate from here." Our long standing community institution such as local government, school districts, and churches are difficult to change and usually they are not the best means for bringing about change and development.

Local government needs modernizing and the extent to which we deal with this problem in America will determine to a large degree our success in solving problems of youth, such as, improving the quality of rural education. The Research and Policy Committee of the Committee for Economic Development "places high priority on the development of an effective system of government at the local level, managerially competent and politically responsive to the citizenry." This report points out that rural America presently has 30% of the population living on 90% of the land, supporting four-fifths of all local government. Further, quoting from the report, "There are approximately 900 counties in this country with populations under 10,000. Nine out of ten of the nation's 3,000 counties have less than 50,000 inhabitants. Various studies have shown that counties could operate more effectively if they were consolidated to contain at least 50,000 residents." Granted, this would not be feasible in some states where areas are sparsely settled; yet, we must make the public aware of the research results and do something about strengthening local government. (I recommend this report to you as being quite useful in gaining insight into some of the reasons we have a lag in rural education and training opportunities.) [1]

In preparing for this meeting, I reviewed some of the major recommendations made at the National Conference on Problems of Rural Youth in 1963. There was general consensus at the meeting that there was need to increase awareness of the problems of rural youth. Many states have established a

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1. "Modernizing Local Government," Committee for Economic Development, New York, 1966, pp. 39-43.

state-wide committee to study the problems and make recommendations. Virginia has a "Governor's Committee for Youth" and some of our counties also have youth committees. The Governor's Committee did a masterful job in their report, but it has been difficult to find evidence of this type of planning at the local level.

One obstacle appears to be a lack of relevant data. Many of my associates in Extension, working at the county level, are getting impatient with the demographers and those responsible for getting out statistical information. They need accurate statistics that are up to date rather than 1959 census data. I am anxious to review the fact book being provided at this conference entitled "Age of Transition -- Rural Youth in a Changing Society." I trust we will not be getting 1959 data, except for comparison purposes!

Another recommendation of the 1963 Conference was to mobilize the rural community for action. We can point to Rural Areas Development Committees and to locally sponsored Community Action Agencies that have done just that -- mobilized local resources to take action on a particular project. However, these OEO projects are necessarily aimed at a particular segment of the population, and most RAD committees do not conduct what I would call comprehensive planning for youth. Projects are nearly always oriented toward a particular problem or group of young people.

I am sure that you can think of rural communities that have not accomplished the first step in program planning -- identifying, recognizing and accepting the problems and needs of youth. (Problems which are often quite obvious.) In many communities some agencies and institutions don't want to be involved, much less be mobilized. For example, in one community that comes to mind, a church had a new Sunday School classroom building which was used very little except on Sundays. They would not agree to even rent the facilities to the local Community Action Agency for a pre-school training center or a day-care center.

A third major recommendation dealt with strengthening the schools. It would be impossible to discuss all the parts to this recommendation, but I would like to touch on several of them. Of course, the primary concern is that we strengthen the quality of teaching and I think we would agree that teachers are better qualified than they were five years ago. More teachers have college degrees and many more are doing graduate work. We see special disadvantaged children, as well as programs for the gifted.

Generally speaking, we have strengthened that guidance and counseling of youth in secondary and high school. Guidance counselors are better qualified because of special courses they have taken, and they are giving students more accurate information.

The quality and availability of post high school training is higher. Some states are putting major emphasis on community colleges, technical schools and higher education. Yet, the percentage of rural graduates completing

requirements for a higher degree is much below that found for urban graduates. Someone has predicted that one-third of the adults will have less than a high school education in 1985. I hope we can prove this forecast to be wrong.

A correlary recommendation to the above was to initiate and expand related educational programs. Scouts, 4-H Club work, church youth organizations and Young Homemakers' Clubs are examples of educational programs which complement and reinforce school curricula and classroom teaching. Membership in these organizations has not grown in proportion to population increases. In fact, we sometimes find obstacles being imposed, such as school administrative policy, which prevents young people from belonging to more than one or two organizations. Some people are saying that you should pay adult leaders to work with youngsters. We sometimes impose unwarranted restrictions on ourselves through rules and regulations, or standards too high for many to achieve.

Many young homemakers are not benefiting from the Extension home economics programs. Research has shown that many young homemakers feel a sense of guilt when they participate in group activities. A study of 269 Indiana young homemakers found that many homemakers believe members of their close reference group (husband, mother, friend) disapproved of their participation in such groups as Young Homemakers' Clubs. The disapproval was most significant in relation to the husband's attitudes. Some of these young women feel that their husband, mother, and close friends doubt the usefulness of what they are learning.

Many in the field of education see the young marrieds as being out of the main stream of community life. They seem to be out of reach of the kinds of help we think they need. Research shows that this age group is least likely to join volunteer organizations to receive help. Many feel that they can't become involved in program planning meetings and other educational meetings because of their responsibilities at home with young children.

A study of Pennsylvania homemakers found that young adults can be reached in ways other than through organized groups; for example, farm women prefer radio, women of blue collar workers prefer newspapers, while women whose husbands were the white collar workers prefer telephone calls directly to the home economist as ways of receiving information available through Extension.

The next recommendation was to expand opportunities for employment. Participants generally agreed that the economic well-being of rural youth is a national problem. Therefore, they thought we should focus upon national programs designed to maintain a high level of employment. The Job Corps, Neighborhood Youth Corps, Work Study Program, MDTA programs are major efforts generated at the national level.

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The Department of Agriculture has put its resources behind agribusiness development in rural areas and also manufacturing industries are being helped to understand the benefits of locating new plant sites in rural areas. The trend, however, is fewer job opportunities in rural areas as farms decrease in number and become more mechanized. (Let me hasten to add that there are jobs available in farming and agribusiness.)

Some industries are opening plants in rural areas, but many of them are paying less than average wages and salaries because the competition is less and the opportunities for advancement are fewer than in urban areas. Even today, in a period of relative low unemployment, 1 out of 6 adults with less than a high school education is unemployed.

The last recommendation to which I will refer was to conduct appropriate research. It was felt that more research is needed to determine the social, environmental and psychological problems of rural youth. The research being done in these areas by many of our Land Grant Universities (these colleges and universities have traditionally been close to problems of rural people) is practically nil. Research grants from Federal agencies to study these problems have been extremely difficult to obtain.

We were able to get a grant in Virginia under Title I of the Higher Education Act to conduct a pilot project in community education which might have implications for rural areas. Dr. Fessler and his staff are finding that we need to help people understand why individuals function as they do in groups. Then we can help them change their discussion habits through various "group dynamics" techniques. The ultimate objective of all this, of course, is to help people become more effective in solving community problems. However, he is finding that few people can stay away from personal activities long enough to combine a "group process" workshop with a "problem solving" workshop. Dr. Fessler is preparing a report on this project and it should prove to be quite interesting.

Now, I shall attempt to shed some light on two questions raised by the conference planning committee. How do you conduct comprehensive planning for rural youth? How do you organize?

In my opinion, we have been wrong in trying to separate the youth of this country by place of residence in order to analyze problems and opportunities. My observations have been that there isn't much difference between rural and urban youth problems in modern day society. I think we will make greater progress when we have honest and sincere commitment from all agencies to attack these problems from national, state and local levels without concerning ourselves with the size of town or city in which the youngster lives. There are some differences to be sure, but the solutions hinge on economic and social conditions that exist in an area, not so much on how many heads can be counted per square mile.

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We need to think of local development and state development because here is where the responsibility lies for education, health, and general welfare of our citizens. When these responsibilities aren't assumed at the local level, the state should take action; and when states fail to meet their responsibilities, the Federal government should take action. What I am saying is that reinforcements must be applied when needed, and certainly this doesn't mean that you try to implement the same kinds of programs in every county and every state across the nation.

Again, in my opinion, we have the organizational structure existing in rural areas to develop our human resources just as we have done with our physical resources. The concept of Rural Areas Development is sound, but not very well understood. This concept is broader than our traditional Extension agricultural and home economics programs where much of the emphasis was on increasing production and efficiency on the farms and making wise decisions in the farm homes regarding family nutrition and health, home furnishings and appliances, and family clothing. The RAD approach goes beyond the individual farms and homes to include the entire community -- its economic base, education system, health facilities, recreation, and all the other components of a neighborhood, county, or multi-county area. The central idea is to organize community leaders to identify problems and opportunities, inventory resources, consider the feasibility of potential developments and improvements, and then further organize and plan to do something about them. Important ingredients in this process are "agency resources" that can be brought to bear on the problems. Too often, those of us representing various agencies go about our everyday business waiting for groups to come to us asking for our services and advice. We must take the initiative when we realize that a community needs our particular program.

Adjustments and development of human resources through informal education and training receives a high priority on the list of RAD objectives. Human resource development requires that educational agencies such as Cooperative Extension, concern themselves with attitudes, aspirations, leadership abilities, and knowledge of public affairs on the part of their clientele. Bringing about change in people -- teaching them to think rather than "what to think," teaching them how to analyze situations and consider alternatives rather than us deciding on an alternative and promoting it, helping people to become involved in self-improvement because they feel a need for additional knowledge and training -- these kinds of human development are necessary for our democratic way of life to flourish and life to have real meaning for our citizens.

It seems to me that a youth committee fits well in the local RAD organizational framework. Many counties and multi-county areas across the country already have youth committees. Perhaps some need new vitality or could use some innovative techniques and methods in conducting comprehensive planning for youth development. The discussion guide for use by youth development committees entitled "Broader Horizons," printed by the Federal

Extension Service in 1963, is an example. We need others.

I don't claim to have the answers. Maybe I am part of the problem because I am not more knowledgeable. I believe it was Dr. Russell Mawby who said, "Either I am unaware, unconcerned, or ineffective in meeting the needs of the hour, and am therefore a part of the problem -- or I am alert, informed, and aggressively providing the answers which the needs of today demand."

In conclusion, if we are to do an effective job in planning, we must:

1. Concentrate on providing factual information to the decision makers, "thought" leaders, or "influence" leaders at the local community level. (These people will multiply our efforts in contacts they make with their associates).

2. Teach principles of economic development, democratic group action, leadership, etc.

3. Involve both "politicians" and those who are not subject to political pressures.

   Local government officials are not prone to make unpopular decisions even though they might be of considerable benefit to the community in the future.

4. Not depend entirely on study committees or other lay groups to "Dig up" the statistics needed for planning and projecting consequences of alternative courses of action. (need a combination of educator - expeditor).

5. Not depend on any one agency of government to serve the educator - expeditor role. (Need people who can bring together the latest knowledge available in the universities, agencies, and other sources, with the energies and brainpower in the communities.)

6. Teach more efficiently and plan more effectively because our time and funds are not unlimited.

7. Do a better job of public relations. Keep the general public better informed on how tax dollars are being used. For example, a recent article in my newspaper announced allocation of Federal funds for MDTA projects in Southwest Virginia -- the training of 25 persons as stenographers $37,499; the training of 36 persons as welders $76,155. Much of these funds will probably go to businesses in the community for equipment, rented classroom space, etc., but the article failed to even mention this.

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8. Put more effort into planning.

(a) Position papers (what is known and unknown)

(b) Needs and opportunities (bring into sharper focus)

(c) Develop a "priority list" of goals and objectives

(d) What is needed to reach goals and objectives?

additional information
competencies
innovations

(e) Assign and accept responsibilities
(all agencies and organizations having a role based on present capabilities work together toward solution of problems)

(f) Get on with the job, checking signals with one another as we proceed.